Montana Office of Vital Records Newsletter

Registrar's Office Prepared to Record Same-Sex Marriages

On November 19, US District Judge Brian Morris barred Montana from enforcing a 2004 amendment to the state Constitution defining marriage as between one man and one woman. Judge Morris ruled that the Montana ban on same-sex marriage violated the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution. The Montana ruling follows one on October 7 by the US Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit (comprising Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, **Montana**, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington), which upheld freedom to marry for same-sex couples and ruled that banning same-sex marriage is unconstitutional. The Circuit Court of Appeals is the second highest federal court, subject to review and reversal only by the United States Supreme Court. It is unlikely that the Supreme Court will change its decision not to hear appeals to reinstate bans on same-sex marriage unless another federal circuit court upholds bans, creating a split among the circuits that will have to be reconciled.

Recognition of same-sex marriage will require minor modifications to many of Montana's official documents, not only those directly related to marriage. The Registrar's Office had a contingency plan to modify the affected electronic filing systems and paper documents and has accommodated the influx of marriage applications that followed the ruling.

If you have questions or encounter difficulties in recording any vital events, please do not hesitate to contact Dean Vig, Vital Records Administration Supervisor, at 406-444-5249 or dvig@mt.gov for help.

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Department of Public Health & Human Services

Meet the New Vital Statistics Lead Epidemiologist

Todd M. Koch, MPH, accepted the position of Vital Statistics Lead Epidemiologist last month. Some of you may already know Todd because he worked as the Maternal and Child Health Epidemiologist in the Office of Epidemiology and Scientific Support for nearly two years, and before that he was the Senior Research Statistician for the Vital Statistics Analysis Unit for several months.

Todd grew up on a farm outside of Milan, Ohio, an agriculture area hardly changed since the birth of the town's most famous resident, Thomas Alva Edison.

He began his early career as a paramedic for one the country's largest private ambulance and fire services and also worked as a Captain on volunteer fire department before returning to college. He earned his undergraduate degree in biology from Bowling Green State University (BGSU) in Bowling Green, Ohio and his MPH degree in Epidemiology from a combined program through BGSU and the University of Toledo. Todd first worked as an Epidemiologist and Emergency Planner for the Erie County Health Department in Sandusky, Ohio where his newly learned skills were quickly put to the test during the 2009 H1N1 pandemic flu outbreak. In addition to responding to reports of infectious diseases, Todd was also a Registered Sanitarian and served as the director-elect of the Ohio Environmental Health Association's Northwest Region. On November 13, 2012, Todd joined the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services as a Senior Research Statistician for the Vital Statistics Analysis Unit. Early in 2013, he was promoted to Maternal Child Health (MCH) Epidemiologist where he continued his analysis of vital events. Todd has the privilege of sitting on the State's Maternal Mortality Workgroup and looks forward to continuing his work in understanding and preventing deaths to the MCH population. Todd lives in Helena with his wife, Wenruizi "Catherine" Koch, and yellow Labrador retriever, Trevor. When not enjoying a quiet evening at home with his wife and dog, Todd is busy exploring Montana on his 2011 Kawasaki KLR650 motorcycle.

Things to Remember When Recording Same-Sex Marriages

The system now records the parties to a marriage as Spouse 1 and Spouse 2 and elicits the sex of each Spouse.

When creating a new marriage record, remember to search under both Spouse 1 and Spouse 2 to make sure that there is not already a marriage application started for a couple.

The sex-validation function is now working. Use the drop-down boxes and make sure you select the correct sex for each Spouse.

The Informed Consent/Waiver of Requirement of Blood Test for Rubella Immunity form has been updated to replace Bride and Groom with Spouse 1 and 2. If you need a copy for your files, it is located in VSIMS under Marriage Documents or you may contact us and we will send you a PDF copy of the form.

For individuals not yet using our electronic system: You have to type up a Marriage Application anyway, why not just do this in VSIMS? Either way you are typing up a Marriage Application twice.

If you have questions, please give us a call.

Birth Registration Gold Star for Excellence Recipients

The state average for on-time registration in the third quarter of 2014 was 85%. The following facilities received birth registration Gold Stars for Excellence for the third quarter. More than 85**%** of their births were registered within 10 days.

Anaconda Community Hospital
Big Horn County Memorial Hospital
Billings Clinic
Cabinet Peaks Medical Center
Central Montana Hospital
Clark Fork Valley Hospital
Frances Mahon Deaconess
Great Falls Family Birth Center
Holy Rosary Healthcare
Kalispell Regional Medical Center

Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital
Missoula Community Medical Center
North Valley Hospital
Northern Montana Hospital
Sidney Health Center
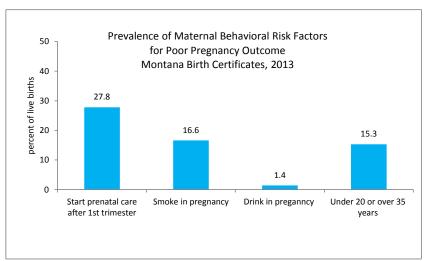St. James Healthcare
St. Joseph Hospital
St. Luke Community Hospital
St. Vincent Healthcare

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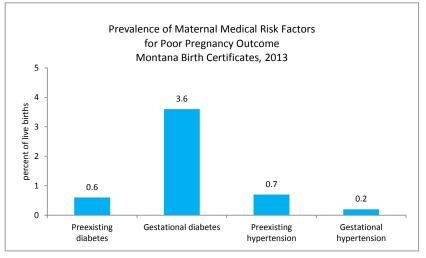Department of Public Health & Human Services

Targeting Modifiable Risk Factors for Poor Pregnancy Outcome

The Montana birth certificate records information on risk factors for poor pregnancy outcome. Many programs in the Department of Public Health and Human Services use these data for program planning and evaluation, to identify risks that can be modified or managed to improve Montana's rates of prematurity, low birth weight, neonatal mortality, and long-term poor health and quality of life of infants.

The most common risk factors are related to maternal behaviors and choices before and during a pregnancy. More than a quarter of the approximately 12,000 women who deliver in Montana each year do not enter prenatal care in the first trimester. Nearly one in five women smoke at some time in their pregnancy. Nearly one in six deliver outside of the optimal age range for safe pregnancy. Only 1% reported drinking during pregnancy, although this may be under-reported because most women know that drinking in pregnancy is unacceptable.

Prevalence of Maternal Behavioral Risk Factors for Poor Pregnancy Outcome
Montana Birth Certificates, 2013

percent of live births

Start prenatal care after 1st trimester: 27.8
Smoke in pregnancy: 16.6
Drink in pregancy: 1.4
Under 20 or over 35 years: 15.3

Medical risk factors for poor pregnancy outcomes are much less common. Just under 4% of women experience gestational diabetes, which confers risks for their infants and puts women at increased risk of developing diabetes themselves later in life. The other three most common

Prevalence of Maternal Medical Risk Factors for Poor Pregnancy Outcome
Montana Birth Certificates, 2013

percent of live births

Preexisting diabetes: 0.6
Gestational diabetes: 3.6
Preexisting hypertension: 0.7
Gestational hypertension: 0.2

medical risk factors each occur in less than 1% of pregnancies but in the aggregate these four conditions affect about 600 pregnancies a year. Early and frequent prenatal care is an important intervention that allows health care providers to help their patients manage these and other conditions to ensure optimal maternal and infant health.

Completing all the fields on the birth certificate supports important Public Health practice and contributes to the health of mothers and babies.

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